

Bobrink Hits Pay Dirt in Calico

by Ted Bobrink

I was laying in bed one night reading up on some Calico history, and came across an article about there being over a dozen mills in and around the town of Calico in the early 1880s. The list told the location of all of the silver mills and I noticed two of them were located right on the edge of Calico Dry Lake, just one mile south of the town site of Calico. One of them was called "The Calico Silver Reduction Co" and was only in business for five years from 1881-1886. The book stated that the CSR&C mill was located on the north side edge of the lake and right next to the old main wagon road that leads from Calico to Daggett. I remembered seeing some large white and red tailings on the edge of the lake one time while driving that old wagon road on the way up to Calico one time. I said to myself.."that must have been the site of the mill they are talking about.

That next day I decided to take a drive up to Calico to see my friend John Ransom who lives just a few hundred yards from the Calico Dry Lake. I called John and he said he would be home after five and for me to meet him at his house. I arrived in the Calico area at around two o'clock and drove across the dry lake heading straight for the mill tailings. When I arrived I parked my Jeep Cherokee next to a large tailing mound and got out of my car to look around. I thought it would be cool to find some slag specimens left over from the early days of Calico, and noticed a fair amount of it laying on the ground just about every where I looked. Most of the pieces were small about the size if a quarter and I was hoping to find some a little larger.



John (in black) and me digging next to the bush. Notice in the background the word CALICO in white high up the the mountain. This can easily be seen from I 215 heading north to Las Vegas.

While I was returning to my Jeep to drop off some specimens, I could see where there were motorcycle tracks running in every direction in around and over the tailing mounds. I noticed an area where I could see the remains of a building foundation that had burned down many years before.

At the edge of the foundation corner there was a large desert sage bush and it had a motorcycle trail leading around it. I looked down and saw something shinny like metal and took out my knife to try to dig it



up. To my surprise the item was metal and to large for me to dig up with a knife. I went back to the Jeep and pulled out a small folding shovel that I use underground and started to dig some more. The shinny area that I noticed on the metal was caused by the motorcycles running over it. The rest of what ever it was I was digging up was very large and rusty.

The ground was real hard digging on that trail, but in just a few minutes I uncov-

ered something I could not believe. It was laying upside down and the shinny spot I first noticed were the short corner legs of a large Silver Ingot Mold. When I pulled it out of the ground, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was all complete, but had rusted through in a few spots. After I regained my composure I said to myself, "What the hell else could be down there?" and started poking around next to where the mold had been. In no time at all I found another mold that had been laying right next to the first one and the dirt started flying. After I pulled the second mold out I could see another one and I decided to go get my friend John so he could get in on the adventure.



It appeared to me that these molds had been stacked on top of each other in the corner of the building. When the building burned, they fell over like dominos and were left there under the building ruins sense the company went out of business in 1886. Large ingot molds like these were made so they would be hard to steal and not be able to be carried on horseback.

I drove to his house as fast as I could and showed John what I had found. I told him to bring two large shovels and get in the car. When I told him there were more, he said "your kidding" and I said "you won't believe it". When we arrived back at the spot where I had found the first two molds we got out and started digging like beavers. Believe it or not, after the smoke cleared we uncovered seven complete molds laying upside down in a row right next to each other. Each one we found was deeper under the sage bush and closer to the old building. Each mold we uncovered was in nicer condition than the one before it, and I think this was due to the bush sucking up the moisture. The last two molds we found were in real nice condition without any holes.



The last and best mold we found all cleaned up. It is 14 X 8 and 8" high. ¹